

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
FLORENCE DIVISION

Brandon Lee Archie Ponds,
PETITIONER

v.

United States of America,

RESPONDENT

Crim. No. 4:07-cr-00482-TLW-2
C/A No. 4:16-cv-02198-TLW

Order

Petitioner Brandon Lee Archie Ponds pled guilty to a drug conspiracy charge and was sentenced as a career offender to 262 months imprisonment.¹ ECF No. 139. In his § 2255 petition, he asserts that he should be resentenced without the application of the career offender enhancement. He argues that the Supreme Court's decision in *Johnson v. United States*, 135 S. Ct. 2551 (2015), which invalidated the Armed Career Criminal Act's residual clause as unconstitutionally vague, also applies to invalidate the identically-worded residual clause in the career offender sentencing guideline, formerly found at § 4B1.2(a)(2).²

The Supreme Court has now foreclosed Petitioner's argument, holding that "the advisory Sentencing Guidelines are not subject to a vagueness challenge under the Due Process Clause and that § 4B1.2(a)'s residual clause is not void for vagueness." *Beckles v. United States*, 137 S. Ct. 886, 895 (2017); *see also United States v. Foote*, 784 F.3d 931, 936 (4th Cir. 2015) (concluding that an erroneous application of the sentencing guidelines, including a career offender designation,

¹ His sentence was later reduced to 156 months pursuant to the Government's Rule 35(b) motion. ECF No. 189.

² After the *Johnson* decision, the career offender guideline was revised and the residual clause was deleted. *See U.S. Sentencing Guidelines Manual § 4B1.2(a)(2)* (U.S. Sentencing Comm'n 2016).

is not cognizable on collateral review pursuant to § 2255). The Court also notes that he would not be entitled to relief even absent *Beckles* because all of his career offender predicate convictions were drug offenses, which were unaffected by *Johnson*. Accordingly, Petitioner's petition for relief pursuant to § 2255, ECF No. 256, is **DENIED**. This action is hereby **DISMISSED**.³

The Court has reviewed this petition in accordance with Rule 11 of the Rules Governing Section 2255 Proceedings. In order for the Court to issue a certificate of appealability, Rule 11 requires that Petitioner satisfy the requirements of 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2), which in turn requires that he "has made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." The Court concludes that he has not made such a showing in light of *Beckles*, and it is therefore not appropriate to issue a certificate of appealability as to the issues raised in this petition. Petitioner is advised that he may seek a certificate from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals under Rule 22 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/ Terry L. Wooten

Terry L. Wooten
Chief United States District Judge

May 9, 2017
Columbia, South Carolina

³ The Court did not require the Government to file a post-*Beckles* response in this case because "the motion and the files and records of the case conclusively show that [Petitioner] is entitled to no relief . . ." 28 U.S.C. § 2255(b). However, the Court notes that the Government filed a response in a similar § 2255 case, asserting that the petition should be denied in light of *Beckles*. See *Swinton v. United States*, No. 4:08-cr-00368-TLW-1, ECF No. 356.